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ABSTRACT

A five week trip to study library and information services in the South Pacific included visits to American Samoa, Fiji, New Zealand, New Guinea, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and Guam. This report provides information on each country's library services, structure and organization, staffing, collections, facilities, and any existing librarianship training programs. In general, the countries are making slow progress towards developing library services; however, there is noticeable progress at the University of South Pacific, University of Papua (New Guinea), and the Papua, New Guinea University of Technology. The most urgent needs identified by the study are more trained librarians, greater financial support, and sympathy from government leaders.
(Author/JBF)

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A REPORT

ON

LIBRARIES IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS: AN IMPRESSION

March 17 through April 19, 1978

by

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INTRODUCTION

On any trip to the Pacific Islands one is immediately struck by the natural beauty of the region, the contrasts among cultures and the intensity of the political aspirations of the people. My trip covered over 18,000 miles and included Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia. It is indeed an understatement to say that one month is hardly enough time to get an in-depth understanding of the totality of library and information services in Oceania. Thus the views I express here are impressionistic and not intended as a final commentary on the state of affairs in librarianship in the Pacific Islands. I should like to thank my sponsors for their support in making this trip possible: The Council on Library Resources, Beta Phi Mu and the University of Hawaii Foundation.

American Samoa, March 19-25

Library development in American Samoa has grown rapidly over the past decade. The Office of Library Services, under the direction of the Department of Education, is responsible for providing school, public and special library services for all segments of the Samoan community. At present library services are provided through 24 school libraries, a central public library, a media resource center, instructional resource center, a bookmobile, a research library (Pacific-Feleti Research Library) and the Central Processing Center.

As a United States territory, American Samoa is eligible for federal funds. Grants have been used to help build new libraries, remodel old library buildings, buy books, equipment, supplies, and train and hire adequate staff.

Each school has a library collection that is intended for community use. Through a federal grant reading centers have been established. These centers

are staffed with tutors and special resources to work with students as well as with adults who are new literates. The reading centers are open two evenings a week.

The grantee had the good fortune to visit at least eight libraries in American Samoa as well as talk with many professionals in the Department of Education about library services. Most were impressed with the tremendous improvement of services since 1970. However, there was recognition of the need for greater budgetary support and more trained staff members.

The Community College of American Samoa has been offering courses in library science for the past few years in the evenings and during the summer. At the present time there are 5-6 students enrolled in the program on a part-time basis. The program provides an Associate of Arts degree in library science and intended to prepare mostly school librarians.

One of the long range goals of the Government of American Samoa is to construct a new central public library to replace the present facility in Utulei, located in the Pago Pago bay area. The bookmobile visits villages and schools without adequate libraries as well as making regular stops at the LBJ Medical Center and the Tafuna Correctional Facility.

Mrs. Linette Hunter, Director of Library Services, indicated her hopes to see the public library of American Samoa evolve into a community information center with satellite centers located in village libraries.

Fiji, March 25 - 31

Fiji, an Independent nation since 1970, is located 5,400 miles from Honolulu, 1,960 miles from Sydney, Australia and 1,250 miles South of the equator. It has a population of approximately 600,000. There are 504

islands covering an area of 7,040 square miles. Suva is located on Vita Levu. There has been considerable effort to upgrade the educational systems and provide improved facilities. This, of course, implies improved libraries.

There are some generalizations one can make about library services in Fiji:

1. Lack of Trained Librarians. At present there are no more than a dozen professionally trained Fijian librarians. These have received their professional education in Australia, New Zealand, United States, West Indies, India, and England. The ex-patriate professional librarians working in libraries in Fiji are at least double the number of nationals who are librarians. The University of the South Pacific has been very helpful in offering training courses for library assistants. The more promising graduates of this program are sent abroad for further study. The problem is that so few of the indigenous people have more than a high school education. Thus making the pool of candidates who have been admitted to college or university very small.

2. Library Coordination. The guiding light in library development in Fiji is the Libraries Advisory Committee. This blue-ribbon committee consists of the chief librarians, of the Suva City Library, Western Regional Library, The University of the South Pacific, the Pacific Theological College and representation from the Department of Education. The committee has been concerned with coordinating library activities on a national level and serves as the liaison with government.

3. Library Services. The most dynamic library program presently in Fiji is the library at the University of the South Pacific. This is a regional

university rather than a national (Fijian) supported institution. It is a liberal arts unversity consisting of the following schools: School of Education, School of Natural Resources, School of Agriculture, School of Social and Economic Development. There is close cooperation with the Fiji Medical and Nursing School. The library is a modern facility which accommodates over 200 readers and has 175,000 volumes.

The Library Service of Fiji is part of the Ministry of Social Services. This agency encourages townships to offer library services to residents. It provides basic book stock and trains staff. The local boards are responsible for providing a building and hiring the ncessary staff. The Western Regional Library provides a book box service to small communities and in April 1978, the British government made a gift of two new bookmobiles to be used in the National Library Service to rural residents.

The National Archives is a well organized research resource. It receives official papers from all government departments, plus non-governmental materials such as letters, diaries, and journals. In 1956, it received the Barker papers and books of some 3,000 items concerned with Fiji dating back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There are several other private collections of people connected with Fiji when it eas a colony of England.

The National Institute of Technology located in Suva, is a flourishing technical training center. It has a new library building and a growing collection of materials. I also visited the library of the Nasinu Teachers College and the Corpus Chrsti Teachers College, both in Suva.

The Suva City library is where I gave a talk to the Fiji LIbrary Association on the topic "The Social Responsibility of Librarians."

Finally, one cannot help but be impressed with the feeling of progress, although slow, among librarians in Fiji. The one big problem is the lack of money.

Wellington, New Zealand, April 1 - 8

New Zealand with a population of approximately 3,000,000 consists of two islands (North Island and South Island). Most libraries in New Zealand are financed by the Government, either locally or nationally. My visit was to Wellington where I was hosted by the New Zealand Library School.

Library education in New Zealand was of major concern to me in New Zealand. The library school was established in 1946 by the National Library Service. Approximately 40 students are admitted to the program and they must have a bachelor's degree. The course is a full-time one year program and awards the Dip. NZLS. Approximately 30 non-graduates are admitted in special cases. However, they must have passed the University Entrance Examination. One must obtain a post as library assistant before being admitted to the course of the New Zealand Library Association Certificate. The library school offers the courses for the NZLA.

Most employers allow their library assistants leave with pay in order for them to attend classes. Final completion of the program leads to the New Zealand Library Association Certificate (NZLA Cert.).

Students enrolled in the graduate program are paid stipends which amount to approximately $6,500 a year. In return for the allowance students are required to undertake a full-time library post in New Zealand.

There has been concern for some time about the library school being under the National Library. After several study reports it now appears that the

program will be moved to Victoria University in Wellington by 1980. The non-graduate program will likely be based at the Wellington Teachers' College.

Libraries

I visited the public library in Wellington and conferred with several staff members. All public libraries in New Zealand are now free. Wellington became a free service in 1951. However, as late as 1973 some towns were just beginning to eliminate the library subscription system.

The National Library proved to be the high light of my visit to libraries. The administration of the National Library is complex in organization. The National Librarian is suppose to have direct access to the Minister of Education, but organizationally reports to the Director of Education. Trustees of the National Library are advisory and advise the Minister of Education. Next there is the Library Committee of Parliament which is also concerned with library affairs affecting the National Library. Under the National Library is the General Assembly Library, the Alexander Turnbull Library, the Country Library Service, and SATIS. The latter division is the Scientific and Technical Information Service and was designed to provide scientific and technical information to businesses and organizations of all types. The staff is SATIS works directly with specialists in the scientific and technical communities.

I also visited the Wellington Polytechnic Library. The library of this institution, from what I was told, is fairly representative of the technical institutes in New Zealand. Most of them rate low priority in financing.

Port Moresby and Lae, Papua New Guinea, April 9 - 15

Papua New Guinea comprises the Eastern half of the island continent of New Guinea. The nation with its 3,000,000 population has been independent

of Australia since 1975. Papua New Guinea is a diverse nation with over 700 different dialects and many cultural groups within this mainly Melanesian population.

In Port Moresby I visited the Department of Library Studies at the Administrative College. The Department of Library Studies was established in 1968. Up until this time Public Library Service conducted an 18-month part-time program for library assistants. This course over a four-year period (1963-1967) produced 12 library assistants. Today, the College offers three levels of courses in library studies:

(1) Library Assistants Course is a 9-months program. Students are admitted after successful completion of grade 10. Those students with library experience who have completed grade 8 may be admitted. The program emphasizes the practical aspects of library work. The skills that are taught will enable students to carry out the non-professional/clerical tasks in libraries. Completion of the program will earn the students a Library Assistants Certificate. Some of the typical courses that are taught are: (1) shelving and filing, (2) typing, (3) Communication skills, book repair, etc.

(2) Library Officers. Students are admitted by successful completion of the library assistants certificate with work experience in a library or completion of grade 10. Students who finish this program may be placed in charge of medium-sized departmental libraries, small public libraries or departments in large libraries. This is a two-year program and upon completion students receive the Library Officers Certificate. Typical courses are: (1) reference (2) descriptive cataloging (3) classification (4) PNG Bibliography (5) Libraries in PNG and in developing Countries.

(3) Diploma in Library Science. This is a course that had its first students in 1977. It is intended to provide training at junior professional level. The program is offered jointly with the University of Papua New Guinea's Faculty of Arts. The core professional studies and related electives are offered at the Administrative College and the University provides the liberal arts courses. This is a two-year program and requires high school graduation for admission. Those who finish this program take positions at Librarians. Typical courses are: (1) Introduction to Librarianship (2) Advanced Comprehension and Composition (2) Human Studies or Social Studies (3) Cataloging and Classification (4) Technical Services (5) PNG Bibliography (6) A-V Techniques (7) Library Service to Children (8) Library Administration.

It is fully expected that this program will be expanded to a four-year Bachelor of Arts program within the next 3-4 years.

There are at least three Papua New Guineans librarians who hold University degrees and are certified librarians. I was told that there are seven Nationals studying for library science degrees in Australia. The number of professional librarians will grow very slowly in Papua New Guinea. At present time there are approximately 45 expatriate professionals working in the country.

Libraries

Public libraries are a part of the National Library Service. There are approximately 25 branch libraries in towns throughout the nation. In Port Moresby the central headquarters for the Public Libray is located in an old frame structure that is very inadequate. This problem will be eliminated when the headquarters will move to the spacious new National Library Building that was completed in March 1978. The new facility is a $2,000,000 gift from

the Australian government and will be a symbol of national pride.

The University of Papua New Guinea Library at Port Moresby and the University of Technology at Lae are the most outstanding library resources in the nation. Both of these are modern libraries. In both cases the directors were concerned about the lack of financial support for their libraries and the dependence on overseas grants from Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

I was told that there are over 30 special libraries in Papua New Guinea. I visited two of these libraries: The Supreme Court and Law Libraries. Both of them were operated by expatriate librarians and were well staffed and managed.

Most of Papua New Guinea's population is rural. It is reported that 80% of the people are illiterate. The single institution one finds in the countryside is the school. However, there are very few libraries.

Sir John Yocklunn, the National Librarian, suggests that the public libraries should assume a leadership role in education for literacy. He recognizes that the key to maintaining literacy, once it has been achieved, is providing appropriate reading materials. Sir John has already established a National Media Service that will be using films, tapes and other types of audio-visuals in communicating information to rural villagers.

In general, library services in Papua New Guinea are developing, but very slowly. There are great needs for professional librarians and a commitment from the Government to support a national library system. The men and women who work in libraries are to be commended for making the best use out of very limited resources.

Manila, Philippines April 16

I was invited by the President of the Philippine Association of Teachers of Library Science (Dr. Ursula G. Picache, Dean, Institute of Library Science, University of the Philippines) to address a dinner meeting of that group. It was possible to meet with the Association since I had to spend one day and a night in Manila to catch a plane to Saipan.

Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands April 17 - 19

In the new Commonwealth of the Marianas I conferred with Mr. Augustine Castro and Mr. Daniel J. Peacock, Superintendents of Library Services in the Commonwealth and the U. S. Trust Territory of the Pacific. Mr. Castro has the task of carving into existence a separate commonwealth library service that existed when the Commonwealth was part of the U. S. Trust Territory. Both of these U. S. territories are planning pre-White House Conferences later this year.

Mr. Castro identifies part of his problem in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. He will be designing programs of library service for 18,000 people scattered over several thousand of miles on isolated islands.

Problems on Library Services in Micronesia are manifold: literacy, at least nine actively spoken languages, lack of financial support, lack of goals for the role of libraries in Micronesian society. The uncertainty of what will happen after the U. S. Trusteeship expries in 1980. There are just over 100,000 people in the Trust Territory and it is political ferment. One person with whom I spoke felt that there might well be three distinct governments that will be new U. S. territories between now and 1980. Taking a long view library development no doubt will be subject to the evolvement and stability of these new U. S. affiliates.